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ABSTRACT

The impact of the College Level Examination Project (CLEP) upon the total community has been good but not widespread enough to be classified "successful." Within the academic community there has been the overwhelming acceptance of CLEP and a continuing upgrading of credits to the benefit of the student, with a growing standardization of acceptable scores from institution to institution. The Regional Office of CEEB attributes these successes largely to the Dallas Public Library Independent Study Project (ISP). ISP has been included in newspaper articles as a worthwhile opportunity for persons in the community, including returning veterans. The Project was listed as one of the "major achievements" in a Goals for Dallas Program progress report. Students and prospective students call the Project Office daily and express appreciation for the "beautiful program." Librarians at the five Branch Libraries hear from pleased students. The analysis of data collected by a telephone questionnaire survey of participants is divided into seven areas: (1) The ISP Newsletter, (2) Branch Library Used for Books or Study, (3) Help from Librarians, (4) Time, Frequency and Use of Library, (5) Workshop Attendance and Evaluation, (6) Progress in Independent Study Program and (7) General Comments on Program. (See also: ED 068 121 through 068 124) (Author/NH)

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REPORT TO THE

NATIONAL INTEREST COUNCIL

Independent Study Project
Dallas Public Library
Dallas, Texas

March 8, 1973

Project Director:

Mrs. Jean Brooks

Project Evaluator:

Dr. Betty J. Maynard
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The Independent Study Project, a study of one library system, The Dallas Public Library System, has shown that people will use the Dallas Public Library Branches for independent study. The number of people using the services and resources offered by the Project has been very small, so successes reported for this library system are based on a minimal number of persons. The use of five model libraries by independent students has suggested that physical size of the library is of little import, but number of staff and quantity of available resources dictate the quality of services rendered. Information and referral on college credit and requirements, student reassurance, and coordination of group and individual tutoring have been the most needed and time-consuming efforts of the Project. It would seem that, at this time, the Dallas Public Library Independent Study Project has not drawn sufficient numbers of interested persons to make feasible tax dollar support for a project coordinator, added branch personnel, or added resources. The present library budget will not cover these additions. Without some form of financial or cooperative assistance, it is doubtful that the Dallas Public Library Independent Study Project can continue beyond the funded period ending in September, 1973.

Training and in-service learning of library personnel

involved in the study has been successful because the librarians have recognized the potential for such a service. The librarian is prepared with expertise to assist the patron in a choice of books and to offer the reassurance and encouragement necessary to spark the prospective learner to continue his learning experience. The librarian has available all the body of information needed to inform the prospective learner on all aspects of this new learning experience. The librarian has learned to differentiate and to deal with variations in the point of entry of interested persons, to refer persons with special needs to the proper referral sources, and to assist those seeking to learn at the level of their information and resource needs and/or desires. There have been no complaints from prospective students in the past six months. Spot checks have indicated nothing but high praise for the performance of the librarians.

Complaints now come from the librarians working in the study. They do not feel "burdened," but they know they are not giving the independent student as much of their time as they would prefer. The librarians are now "used to working with" the independent student and are disturbed by the fact that they simply do not have time available to give the best quality service. Statistics from the five Branch Libraries covering the first eighteen months of the Project show that the in-depth inquiries, alone, (those requiring a minimal

average of one-half hour per person) both in person and by telephone, number fifteen hundred. These inquiries concern the concept of independent study, college information, and reassurance. Inquiries involving readers' guidance, (the use of the librarian's expertise and the libraries' resources) have numbered only two hundred in the same eighteen month period. The bulk of all types of inquiries falls within the 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. time period, and the rush hour time block common to all five branches is from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The in-depth questions require uninterrupted time, a relaxed atmosphere, and patience, all of which are difficult if not impossible to achieve with telephones ringing and people waiting for assistance. Situations such as this are met with a deployment of all available staff and a necessary curtailment of time spent with a single individual. Present budget commitments do not allow for the addition of further staff.

The Project Office has published an information pamphlet and monthly newsletter and prepared a notebook of information for use by both the librarian and patron at the library. All of these resources have been successful in cutting librarian time required for information dissemination. The monthly ISP News has been successful as a source of continuing information for, and contact with, the independent student. The newsletter has stressed related learning situations available within the community.

The third publication is a guide for the independent student planning to use CLEP credits toward a degree. Cooperation with the Dallas academic community has become increasingly successful as evidenced by letters of commendation for the program, referrals of students to the Project Office and Branch Libraries, and a readily accessible information exchange. Combined inextricably with this success has been the growth in use of the Independent Study Project Office as a resource for information and referral for independent students and prospective students in the community. The variety of information needed and the difficulty of the individual student to communicate his needs and to become oriented as to where and how to obtain information points up a community need, some of which might be within the province of the colleges and universities themselves to alleviate. Easy access to one on-campus source for reliable information could do wonders for the morale of a prospective student and the image of the college or university as a purveyor of information about its own requirements. An average of one hundred calls per month from adults for educational information on testing of all types, tutoring, counseling, vocational guidance, and English as a second language, coupled with requests for books and other learning resources from the GED through GRE levels indicates a community need for personally oriented information and referral which has

been sucessfully met by the Independent Study Project. If educational options are to be opened to the community, the library's function as coordinator for educational information on this one-to-one basis could be very effective. As suggested above, present budget commitments of the Dallas Public Library System do not provide funds for future Independent Study publications nor for staff to coordinate a person-to-person information and referral service.

The Independent Study Project has been successful in providing counseling service for those students who are interested in continuing their education but are not yet certain of goals. From the Project Office the volunteer services of a Retired Senior Volunteer with a Master's Degree in counseling are coordinated and appointments scheduled at the time and place convenience of the student. Counseling time spent with each individual ranges from one half to two hours, and the place of meeting is not always at the library. Results and feedback to date indicate that the student is helped to reach decisions on immediate action and to plan for long term goals. In some instances the need has been only for a quiet time and place for information input. The call for this service has been minimal: eighteen persons in a four month period of time.

In that Branch Library which is situated in a primarily black area, the CLEP goal for independent study has not been

successful. Persons who showed interest at the beginning of the Project were attracted for economic reasons and saw the CLEP General Examinations as the shortest route to their goals. Project personnel were offering an opportunity to learn, but failed to consider practical facts of living in attempting to spark an interest in learning for its own sake. There was a period of high interest when learning took place, but it did not equip the student with the skills and background of experience necessary to accomplish his goals within a reasonable time through these particular tests. These people are fully capable of mastering the test materials only over a long range period with one-to-one help. The goals are too distant, and the information required most often does not relate to their past experiences. (From experiences with this group, it appears that the CLEP Subject Examination approach will be most realistic for future goals and relation to experience.) The library staff can not give the time required for needed continuing support, and tutoring by the academic community involved in the Project is too costly. In the other four Branch Libraries in the Project there are persons from minority groups studying in the Project.

The answer for needs at that Branch in which CLEP was not successful appears to have been answered with the independent study approach to the GED level. A volunteer group consisting of two Retired Senior Volunteer Program

teachers and a young independent student has been conducting successful workshops on preparation for the GED at this Branch Library. Study is accomplished independently with backup tutoring when needed. Successful test-takers attend workshops to give feedback and reassurance. One successful test-taker from the library's community has volunteered to continue weekly help sessions. If the librarian can sustain this volunteer program from within his community it will be considered a highly successful undertaking. Two other Branch Libraries in the Dallas Public Library System have requested this GED program because of requests from individuals in their communities. These experiences have been successful in pointing out that educational and economic differences within each model community dictate varying directions in interest and possible motivation.

Help sessions for the Independent Study Project for those who are studying for CLEP and/or self-enrichment have displayed a mystifying variability in success. Attempts to present help sessions which satisfy the combined interests of "shoppers" coming for entertainment, persons interested in personal enrichment, and serious students preparing for tests have not been successful. More options in types of programs could be an answer. In the past six months those attending help sessions have been largely those wishing to prepare for tests or upgrading work skills. Requests for a

series of three sessions in a subject area have also met with varying success. To date, only one of these sessions held all persons who had started with the group and added more. That series ended on Halloween evening with a snack feast brought by the students because the professor had announced at his first session that the librarian would throw a party at the final meeting. Students from that group attribute its success to the instructor's knowledge of his subject, the subject matter itself (Marketing), the instructor's practical experience in the field, his personality, his ability to relate personally to each individual, and his obvious desire to have each student learn.

Other help sessions which appeared to contain the same ingredients have not been successful in holding students through more than the first or second sessions. This aspect of the Project is one which still remains fraught with unanswered questions. Six hundred thirty students have attended help sessions in the eighteen months of the the Project, and in that time the only criticism has been that the sessions had not been planned with more than one in a series. Statements of interest and enjoyment have come at the close of each session, but the Independent Study Project can not yet qualify the sessions as successful because attendance numbers have steadily decreased.

It is apparent that what is not stimulating and relevant

on campus is even less so out in the community. It is also possible that what is stimulating and relevant on campus will not necessarily succeed out in the community. The problems of scheduling help sessions have successfully shown the librarian that with flexibility the library can function for the convenience of the independent student without detriment to other services.

The Study Guides/Reading Lists have been successful in preparing some students for test achievement. The study guides have been reported as good aids to learning guidance. Of forty test-takers known to the Project Office, approximately one half have reported using the study guides. Several have indicated they could not have done the study without the guides, and several have scored in the 90 to 99th percentiles. The first reading lists are often too heavy, and time has been spent on instruction in their use.

Guidelines have been drawn up which are resulting in changes in the new guides. The Project has not been successful in designing one model, but prefers the approach that variations in subject area will result in several model types. If a member of the academic community suggests a book not contained on the list, the independent student will often buy the book for himself. A recommendation from the faculty member seems to outweigh any suggestion from the librarian. New book suggestions from faculty members have not resulted

in library orders. With increases in the operating budget due to normal expansion of the System (new Branch Libraries) budget allocations to support any new service would have to be significantly justified. Such justification appears doubtful in the case of the Independent Study Project because of the small number of continuing independent students attracted.

The impact of the Project upon the total community has been good but not widespread enough to be classified "successful." Within the academic community there has been the overwhelming acceptance of CLEP and a continuing upgrading of credits to the benefit of the student, with a growing standardization of acceptable scores from institution to institution. The Regional Office of CEEB attributes these successes largely to the Dallas Public Library Independent Study Project. ISP has been included in newspaper articles along with other educational opportunities as a worthwhile opportunity for persons in the community, including returning veterans. The Project was listed as one of the "major achievements" in a Goals for Dallas Program progress report. Students and prospective students call the Project Office daily and express appreciation for the "beautiful program." Librarians at the five Branch Libraries hear from pleased students.

It can not be said that the Project has been successful

in leading adults to independent study for the pure unadulterated pleasure of learning. The Project has been successful in introducing some people to the fact that they are not too old to learn and that there are new options open for achieving higher education. Neither can it be said that the Project has been successful in instilling motivation to learn on any continuing basis beyond achievement of set goals, which in most cases are the credential, academic credit. Hopefully, some means of coordinative community effort can be found to continue this small start toward an open community for learning.

REPORT TO THE

NATIONAL INTEREST COUNCIL

Independent Study Project
Dallas Public Library
Dallas, Texas

March 8, 1973

Project Evaluator:

Dr. Betty J. Maynard
Southern Methodist University

Introduction

Following the last meeting of the National Interest Council on September 14-15, 1972 it was decided that a telephone survey of a sample of the participants in ISP would be conducted. The intent of this survey was to try by personal contact to elicit more in-depth responses from the respondents about their participation in the program. It was felt that some indication of involvement in the program, other than the long-term evidence of taking a CLEP examination, would be helpful in assessing the program's value to participants.

A telephone questionnaire was designed and administered with the help of volunteers recruited by the Project Director. The mailing card file maintained by the Project Director's office of the names collected during the first six months of the program were used to draw a random sample. Every third name on the list for each of the five branch libraries participating was chosen.

The total sample was composed of 149 persons. Forty five of these were located and were still sufficiently interested, 18 months after the beginning of the program, to respond to a questionnaire. This is a retention rate of three out of every ten persons who filled out a card during the first six months of the program.

The rate of response or retention of interest rate (number interviewed to number in sample) varied by branch as follows:

Hampton-Illinois	47%
Audelia Road	31
Oak Lawn	29
Crossroads Learning Center	27
Preston Royal	26

A large share of the non-response to the questionnaire is due to incorrect telephone number and numbers no longer in service. Although it is not possible to be exact in terms of size, another large segment of the respondents, those who were contacted but did not answer the questionnaire, said they were no longer interested in the program for various reasons: some have entered colleges, some are not studying and not interested, some say they are working and no longer have time, some say the program was not what they wanted. One died.

This report which is concerned only with the analysis of the data collected by the questionnaire is divided into seven areas:

I. The ISP Newsletter

II. Branch Library Used for Books or Study

III. Help from Librarians

IV. Time, Frequency and Use of Library

V. Workshop Attendance and Evaluation

VI. Progress in Independent Study Program

VII. General Comments on Program

Newsletter

Almost everyone (91%) is receiving the ISP Newsletter. Although only one person could recall anything from the last newsletter about which more information was desired, two thirds find it has been helpful to them, especially for the dates of workshops. Two suggestions were made for information that would be helpful to them: a list of books relevant for an upcoming workshop; a list of Universities that accept ISP credits.

Branch Library Used for Books or Study

The respondents were asked which branch they use for books and study to determine if they are using branches other than that closest to them.

In every case most are using the branch where they filled in their card, but there are a few who use two branches. The main library is used as are other branches not participating in ISP, Casa View, Lakewood, Park Forest, and Pleasant Grove each by one or two of the respondents.

Help from Librarians

Help in reading or studying was requested from librarians by six out of ten of the respondents. A third of these requested help in locating books; a fourth got help with references and other materials and a fourth got general information and help. A few (12%) required information specifically on ISP and/or CLEP. Only one respondent replied that having asked for help, the librarian did not know what to tell her.

Those respondents who said they had not asked for aid from the librarians were asked if they had been able to locate what they needed. Eight out of ten replied affirmatively. One of the respondents said the librarian was too busy to help.

In further probing of the relationship of the librarian and the student, respondents were asked if the librarians were generally helpful to them. Three out of four said they have been helpful. The largest proportion of these, almost half, gave general commendatory replies such as: they took time to help, they were courteous, they have a very good attitude. Another third replied that the librarians helped them to find material. Other ways in which some respondents found them helpful were in instructions on how to use the library, suggestions of books, and general information on ISP.

The few (7%) who found the librarians not helpful said they were too busy to assist, weren't very cooperative or had a cold attitude and they knew nothing about the program.

Suggestions about how the librarian could be more helpful were few. Most simply said they did not know how they could be more help or by replying no to the question inferred that the librarians are helpful.

Location of books does not seem to be a major problem for the ISP students. Six out of ten have found what they want. Only 13 percent said they have been unable to locate books. The remaining did not answer the question.

Time, Frequency and Use of Library

There is no peak time of day or night when most students use the library. About a third use it "anytime" or it varies according to their choice. Another third uses it in the afternoon. The morning and evening hours are used by another third with half of these going in the morning and half in the evening. The few remaining choose a span of time from late morning through noon to early afternoon.

The frequency of use of the libraries for studying and reading does not indicate that there is a great commitment to a regular pattern of study. Two out of five say they use the library occasionally, about one in five say they never use it. A hard core of 13 percent use it often. The remaining are about equally divided (30%) in using it once a week and once a month.

Over three fourths of the students use the library for other purposes, mainly general fiction or pleasure reading. About ten percent of them do not use the library for other purposes. These, it could be assumed, were attracted to library use by the introduction of the ISP program.

Workshop Attendance and Evaluation

Only 13 percent of the respondents have attended a workshop at one of the branch libraries. When these respondents were asked which one(s) had

been most helpful, two persons said the one on Psychology, one said the How to Study workshop, and one person mentioned three: Marketing, English and Methods of Testing.

Asked to suggest topics for workshops the respondents gave a list of subjects with only mathematics being requested by more than one person. The list includes: Accounting, English, Fine Arts, Art History, Aviation, Creative Writing. The request for a course on "How to Begin" may be an encapsulation of the feelings of more than this one person when confronted with an opportunity and a vague idea of how to utilize it.

Progress in the Independent Study Program

An indication of how successful this program has been in the goal of involvement in independent study for either personal enrichment or the taking of a CLEP exam can be based on three questions. One asked where they consider themselves to be in progress toward a particular course of study. The others were concerned with the CLEP exam, whether or not they have taken an exam and whether or not they intend to take (an) (another) exam.

In citing where they are in the program three out of ten gave positive answers to two kinds: half of these give particular subject matter areas in which they are studying, the remaining half say they are studying but not for any particular course. Another two out of ten gave no answer to the question. In summary, half of these respondents are not involved in study at all, and of the remaining half, two out of ten are just beginning after 18 months, with three out of ten being actively involved.

Only two persons (4 % of the sample) have taken a CLEP exam, but over a third (36%) say they intend to do so, another group (27%) say "maybe." A more tentative "Don't Know" was given by another 16 percent. Adding these potential exam takers to those who responded affirmatively, almost four out of five are considering the possibility.

Weighing the answers to these three questions together it can be said that after 18 months, the accomplishment of the goal of taking a CLEP exam has been attained by very few. If those who say they are making progress in their studies and those who say they plan to take a CLEP exam are viewed as being in pursuit of independent study whether or not they actually take an exam, then at least a third of the respondents to the sample survey could be presumed to be benefiting from this program.

It was noted in the beginning section of this report that for the sample of the total number of persons who filled out a file card during the first 18 months of the program, about three out of ten have retained enough interest in the program to respond to a questionnaire. If it is considered that about a third of those who responded to the questionnaire are in some measure still involved with the program, then it is reasonable to suggest that about ten percent of those who became interested in the program during the first six months are still pursuing an interest in some form of independent study.

General Comments on the Program by Respondents

Over a third of the respondents made general, very favorable remarks about the program, from good to great to marvelous. Another 18 percent say it is a good program with a qualifying statement. These qualifying statements are: can't find time, SMU and librarians don't understand it, have started to school. Miscellaneous comments (13%) are: hard to get started, need someway to let us know how we are doing, more daytime workshops, better if we didn't have to get credit from a university, can't study alone. The remaining third of the respondents made no comment about ISP.

Conclusions

The suggestion given above that perhaps only about ten percent of those who evidenced interested in the program during the first six month are still interested should be placed in the perspective that many were probably only seeking information without concrete intentions. Gauging the success of a program on this limited evidence of response at this time would not be entirely valid.

There are some impressions from the analysis of these questionnaires which may be useful to elaborate upon. One is that a number of persons in response to different questions have indicated that they have returned or are enrolling in a university or college. This could be interpreted to mean that having been exposed to the materials, workshops and other help in the ISP program, these persons have been encouraged or convinced themselves that they can and should pursue a regular course of study in an institutional setting. This group of persons should be counted on the success side of the program's ledger even though they dropped out of it. Another, perhaps parallel point is that a number of respondents indicate that they can't get started or they can't study alone, or they need someway to know how they are doing. These persons may be indirectly asking for the kind of sustained relationships between counselor, advisor or instructor and student that is not offered by ISP on a long-term, academically oriented basis. They perhaps do not have the self-confidence or the means of attending an institution of higher education and eventually drop out of the program. Those who do take advantage of the program either for self-enrichment or to take a CLEP exam for placement credit must necessarily be highly motivated.

The program as presently constituted cannot give sustained personal contact hours of counseling and guidance which would involve a larger number

of the less highly motivated student. However, persons with a more than ordinary level of self-motivation and determination could still take advantage of the program if information and materials were made available to them through the library system.